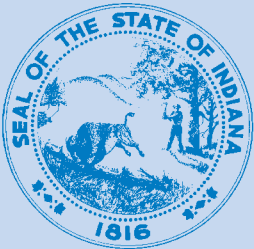


State Representative

Scott D. Pelath

The 2000 Session of the Indiana Legislature



How To Reach
Representative

Scott D. Pelath

RESIDENCE

1824 Manhattan St.
Michigan City, IN 46360

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

House of Representatives
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2786
1-800-382-9842
H9@ai.org

WEB SITE

www.state.in.us/R9

Spring, 2000

Dear Friends,

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly adjourned on March 3.

We passed several significant pieces of legislation, including a plan to distribute the funds Indiana will receive from the tobacco settlement and a proposal to increase benefits for workers severely injured on the job. We also adjusted the unemployment compensation system, making improvements for both workers and employers.

I have detailed several new laws in this newsletter and have included some other information that you might find useful.

In the coming months, I will be working on interim study committees. Study committees allow legislators the opportunity to explore subjects in greater depth than is permitted during the session.

Please contact my office at 1-800-382-9842 if you have questions or concerns regarding state government.

Sincerely,



E-mail updates available on state legislative issues

Several people have indicated to me that they would like to receive e-mail updates on legislative issues and other issues important to our district. I am pleased to offer this service through my legislative office.

Simply e-mail or call my office and I will add you to this list. I am excited about the technological advances over the past few years that allow you nearly instant access to legislative news and information.

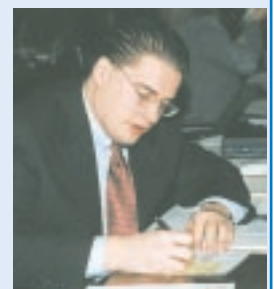
Inside this newsletter

Tobacco Settlement

Helping Working Families

School Safety

Census 2000





Session News

Medicaid eligibility definition adjusted

Currently, Indiana requires that a person suffer from a life-long disability in order to receive Medicaid Disability assistance. The General Assembly approved legislation that would replace the life-long requirement with a four-year disability requirement.

Indiana has the most restrictive Medicaid Disability definition in the nation. Forty-eight other states require that a person suffer from a disability for one year. New Hampshire is the only other state which requires a four-year disability.

With so many advances in health care, there is a treatment for almost every type of ailment. Medicaid was designed to help needy individuals, but the current system excludes so many people from qualifying for the aid that most other states would offer them.

This is not an attempt to provide free health care to all Hoosiers. It simply modifies the restrictions just enough so that a few more deserving individuals are able to qualify.

Legislature allocates tobacco funds

Bi-partisan agreement to help several programs and groups

Certainly one of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was passage of legislation that sets up a system to allocate the more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The funds will be used for health care services, tobacco prevention programs and assistance for senior citizens on lower incomes who have trouble purchasing prescription drugs.

The final bill was the result of many months of work by legislators on both sides of the aisle. From the start, we have attempted to assure that most of the funding goes to health care and efforts to reduce the use of tobacco products.

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support, along with a one-time-only appropriation of \$10 million to make physical improvements to facilities.

This is a considerable accomplishment for a short session of the Legislature, and it is a tribute to the willingness of officials to set aside partisan differences in order to pass bills that will have long-term benefits for the people of our state.



Rep. Pelath with his daughter, Israel, on the House floor.



Rep. Pelath discusses legislation with Rep. John Frenz

Senior citizens will also see benefits

Senior citizens on lower incomes should not have to choose between buying food to eat or the prescription drugs they need to remain healthy. Thanks to the legislation allocating money from the national tobacco settlement, they won't have to make that decision.

The final bill includes \$20 million to help low income seniors purchase prescription drugs. From my visits around the district, this is one of the most pressing concerns among older Hoosiers. Some people even have been forced to drive as far as Canada to get these drugs at a more affordable rate.

Census 2000

Why should you fill out the form?

Census Facts

- Census officials estimate that they missed more than 8.8 million people in 1990, mostly children, minorities and the poor.
- Four in 10 households did not return the census forms sent by the government in 1990.

The results of Census 2000 will impact millions of dollars in federal funding for the State of Indiana. Indiana's population is estimated to be around 6 million -- up from 5.5 million in 1990 (the last official U.S. Bureau of Census count).

You should have already received your form in the mail. The results will be used to determine federal funding for roads, schools, hospitals, services for the elderly and many other local needs.

There will be two forms.

Nationwide, five out of six households will receive the short form which will ask questions about your name, sex, age, relationship to others in your household, Hispanic origin, race and whether your home is owned or rented. It will take approximately ten minutes to finish the form. A longer form will be mailed to the remaining households, asking questions about education, ancestry, employment, disability and others. This form will take approximately 38 minutes to finish.

To make sure everyone is included, census workers will distribute forms to people who live in group settings, such as universities and colleges, nursing homes, transitional shelters, correctional institutions, and halfway houses.

*Census information **cannot** be shared with others*, including Immigration and Naturalization Services, welfare services, Internal Revenue Service, police, courts and the military.

Be counted --- complete and return your form today!

Helping working men and women

New legislation addresses disability, unemployment

Around 90 percent of Indiana workers who receive a disabling injury in a workplace accident will see their compensation increase close to 50 percent. There are improvements in the one-time cash payments made to a person who suffers a permanent partial impairment in a workplace accident. The change will help any worker determined to have up to the 30th degree of impairment, which includes around 90 percent of all injured employees. Weekly disability payments also will increase.

Indiana workers who lose their jobs will see unemployment compensation increase by 33 percent over the next three years. The maximum benefit will increase from \$252 to \$336 by July 2002. To finance the increase, the state will use a larger share of the unemployment trust fund, a move that will cut premium payments by employers by nearly \$80 million the next two years.



Over \$672 million in tax cuts

1999 budget provides cuts for families, seniors

- *Homeowners:* Property taxes on a taxpayer's principal place of residence can be deducted up to \$2,500.

- *Senior citizens:* The income tax deduction for most seniors was increased from \$1,000 to \$1,500. Each qualified taxpayer may take this deduction, which means married couples may now deduct \$3,000 from their adjusted gross income. Many seniors also received an increase in the property tax deduction from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

- *Dependent children:* The income tax deduction was increased from \$1,000 to \$2,500 for dependent children under age 19 and full-time students under age 24. You may reduce your Indiana adjusted gross income for each qualifying dependent.

- *Renters:* The renters' income tax deduction was increased from \$1,500 to \$2,000.

- *Inventory tax cuts:* The inventory tax was eliminated for 87 percent of Indiana businesses and farms.



Rep. Scott D. Pelath
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2786

Call the Statehouse toll-free
1-800-382-9842

***See inside to add your name
to my e-mail update group***

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Indiana House of
Representatives

Printed on Recycled Paper (9)

State legislative web site

The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items. The main site at www.state.in.us offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at www.state.in.us/R9 and explore various items related to the legislature.

A new feature on my web site will allow you to request various House publications. We currently offer publications specifically designed for senior citizens, grade-school children, and high school students in the process of choosing a college. Other publications give a general overview of various Indiana state agencies, offer a guide to women's health and advise how to avoid being the victim of a scam. There is also a booklet available which details every bill that became law during this year's legislative session.

You may also request booklets by calling my legislative office at 1-800-382-9842.



A screen shot of my legislative home page

Top Five State Web Sites*

1. State Job Bank
2. Hoosier Lottery Homepage
3. Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Search
4. General Assembly homepage
5. Dept. of Environmental Management homepage

*Based on number of visitors as of February 25, 2000